

GORDON, A. W.

INTERVIEW

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An Interview with Mr. A. W. Gordon, Pioneer Oil Man,  
758 N. Denver St, Tulsa, Oklahoma.  
By - W. T. Holland, Investigator.  
November 22, 1937.

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I was born in Crawford County, Pennsylvania, in 1842. My parents were natives of that state. My father was of Scotch descent and my mother was of German descent.

I suppose it was natural for me to get into the oil business for I was born within twenty-eight miles of the "Drake" well, the first oil well in Pennsylvania, and, in fact, in the whole United States.

When just a young man I became interested in oil and went to work in the field. A few years after the Drake well was drilled, I began to buy up leases in Butler County, Pennsylvania, and began drilling on my own. This was about sixty-five years ago, or about 1872. I had not been operating very long until I found that I had a competitor in William Fleming. Well, he and I had a great race in getting the best locations, as we saw them. We finally got acquainted and agreed to operate together. We operated in Butler County, Pennsylvania, for some time.

as a partnership until, in 1887, when Fleming and another man and I organized the Ohio Oil Company at Findlay, Ohio.

I had the honor and pleasure of attending the "Golden" celebration of that event this summer, and was presented with a trophy, suitably inscribed commemorating the event.

I could write or tell enough to make a book regarding the early drilling, our rigs, etc. Our tools were extremely crude of course, as we used just what equipment we had, and as difficulties occurred, we managed to overcome them, devised something to do the job, and, through the years, equipment improved until today.

I surveyed and helped to put in the first natural gas line in the country. This was out of Titusville, or from the oil field to Titusville.

In the early days in Pennsylvania and later in Kansas, we did not have the assistance of geologists in locating oil fields. We were all "wild catters" and each operator acted according to his own "hunch" or idea in locating a well.

My first well was at Pleasantville, Pennsylvania. In the Ohio Oil Company, Mr. Fleming was president and I had charge of all production. I would not try to say just how many wells I drilled in my sixty-five years of operation.

I came into Kansas as a pioneer oil man and opened up the field at Independence, Kansas, drilling thirty or more wells there. That was about the turn of the century. About this time oil was discovered at Red Fork and Glenpool. I divided my time between Kansas and Oklahoma for about five years, when I came to Tulsa and located permanently. I operated in the Glenpool, Oilton, and in the Jennings fields of Oklahoma.

I retired some years ago as I am now ninety-five years of age, but was active for sixty-five years in the oil business.

In 1934 I had the honor of being chosen as "The Grand Old Man of Oil" by the International Oil Exposition held in Tulsa, and I was given a gold medal which I prize very highly.

My hobby some forty years ago was breeding and

training race horses. I had several winners. Belle T., with a record of 2.10 $\frac{1}{4}$ , was in the circuit one year and won every race, including the one at Lexington, Kentucky.

About tools, I recall that our first drill bits were so light that we carried them on our shoulders to the block when we wanted to sharpen them.